**Covid-19 & Black Workers: Race, Gender, and Labor**

Comparative Women’s Studies Special Topics Course

Spelman College

100% Virtual Synchronous

Spring 2021

**Instructors**

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**Course Description**

This course centers Covid-19 in a deep exploration of intersecting and systemic inequalities that have impacted the lives of Black workers historically and today. We will begin the course with an introduction to racial, class, and gender disparities in the US labor sector that the pandemic has exposed and further deepened. We will then delve into a historical analysis of systemic inequalities in relation to Black labor and how Black workers protested labor exploitation. We will trace these historical roots of systemic inequalities into the present by analyzing their impact on Black laborers today and organized Black labor resistance to these injustices.

**Office Hours**

Students may schedule appointments by email. We will offer zoom appointments and phone appointments.

Tuesdays-By appointment

Wednesdays- 10am-1pm, or by appointment

Thursdays-By appointment

\***Students may make appointments for other meeting times as well.**

**Course Rationale:** It is the expectation of faculty members in the Comparative Women’s Studies Program that students must be introduced to topics that engage the particular ways in which race, class, gender, and sexuality impact people’s experiences. This special topics course takes a feminist theoretical approach to understanding how intersecting inequalities have shaped Black women’s labor experiences historically and continue to do so today. Students who take this course must be prepared to deepen their writing, thinking, and reading of media sources and textbooks. They must also demonstrate effective writing and oral communication skills.

**This course satisfies an elective requirement in the Comparative Women’s Studies Program and Sociology.**

**Course Requirements:**

1. Class discussions- 25%
2. Facilitations- 25%
3. Mid-Term Project -25%
4. Final Project – 25%

**Goals and Outcomes**

* Demonstrate an understanding of the social injustices that have impacted Black workers since the nineteenth century
* Analyze how the current pandemic has impacted the health, family lives, and labor experiences of Black workers
* Examine how intersecting racial, class, and gender inequalities have shaped the labor experiences of Black people historically
* Trace the ways in which racial, class, and gender disparities shape Black workers’ lives today
* Explore Black workers’ organized resistance to labor exploitation historically and today

**Assignments**

**1 & 2- Class Discussions and Facilitations:**

All students are expected to come to class prepared to share their interpretation, analysis and synthesis of assigned readings and media materials. Each week, a group of students will be responsible for co-facilitating class discussion with their own discussion questions. The group is also expected to post their discussion questions and commentaries about the assigned readings in advance of class discussion. This assignment will rotate each week.

**3- Mid-Term Project**

Students will complete a mid-term group assignment to demonstrate their knowledge of the information covered during the first half of the course. They will also present their group project in the form of an oral presentation.

**4- Final Exam Project**

Students will complete a final exam group assignment to demonstrate their comprehensive knowledge of the information covered throughout the entire course. They will also present the assignment in the form of an oral presentation.

**Course Structure**

This course will be delivered entirely online through the course management system Spel*e*Learn (Moodle). Log-in to your Spel*e*Learn (Moodle) account from the My[Spelman Portal](about:blank)  (my.spelman.edu) to access the course materials, activities, assessments, and resources. Course sessions are being delivered through the Zoom Platform.

Throughout the semester, you will participate in a blend of individual and group activities accessed thru SpeleLearn (Moodle). The SpeleLearn (Moodle) course will house links to YouTube, zoom and other Internet-based technologies. Course activities will consist of reading books, viewing videos and films, discussion forums, and group assignments. 

**Technology Requirements**

* A wired Internet connection (DSL, LAN, or cable connection is desirable with Bandwidth of 512Kbps for connecting to SpeleLearn (Moodle) course management system is recommended).
* [System Requirements](about:blank)(Click to view)
* Webcam with microphone

**Technology Service Desk** Contact the Spelman Technology Services (STS) Service Desk for technology related questions or issues by phone at (404) 270-5400 or via email at

" stservicedesk@spelman.edu

IT professionals staff the Service Desk Monday through Friday from 8 AM through 11 PM; Saturday, 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM, and Sunday, 1:00 PM -4:00 PM. Service Desk staff provide phone support for College enterprise applications, including the MySpelman portal, SpeleLearn (Moodle) Learning Management System, and Microsoft Office 365.

**Late Assignments**

Students will know of all due dates early in the semester. It is expected that students will work on assignments throughout the semester. **Late assignments will not be accepted. The professors are not responsible for assignments that are not submitted in accordance with classroom instructions and communications. All assignments will be submitted on moodle as word documents. If the professor cannot access the submission, the student will receive a grade of zero (0).**

**Academic Honesty**

At the heart of Spelman College’s mission is academic excellence, along with the development of the intellectual, ethical and leadership qualities. These goals can only flourish in an institutional environment where every member of the College affirms honesty, trust, and mutual respect. All members of the academic community of Spelman College are expected to understand and follow the basic standards of honesty and integrity, upholding a commitment to high ethical standards. Students are expected to read and abide by the Spelman College Code of Conduct (see Spelman College Student Handbook) and are expected to behave as mature and responsible members of the Spelman academic community. Students are expected to follow ethical standards in their personal conduct and in their behavior towards other members of the community**. They are expected to observe basic honesty in their work, words, ideas, and actions. Failure to do so is a violation of the Spelman College Academic Integrity Policy.** **Plagiarized materials will receive a grade of “F” and will be referred to the Office of the Academic Dean.** Violators will be subject to the sanctions outlined in the Spelman College Bulletin.

**Disability Statement**

Spelman College is sensitive to the special needs of students with disabilities. Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services privately to discuss her specific needs. Please contact the Office of Disability Services at 404-270**-**5289 in Mac Vicar Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

**Appointments**

The professors encourage students to make appointments to discuss course materials and/or other matters related to the course. Students are also strongly encouraged to take advantage of the e-mail system for communication. Many matters can be addressed through e-mail: Sheri Davis-Faulkner ([sdd123@smlr.rutgers.edu](mailto:sdd123@smlr.rutgers.edu)) or Dr. Danielle Phillips-Cunningham ([dphillips3@twu.edu](mailto:dphillips3@twu.edu)).

**Standards of Behavior**

All students are expected to conduct themselves as serious and engaged scholars at all times. Cell phones must be placed in the off position upon entry to each class session.

**Netiquette & Discussion Expectations**

Netiquette stands for network etiquette. In other words, it is the code of behavior when communicating online. In your online course, you will have many opportunities for social interaction. However, you will not always have the opportunity to observe facial expressions, body language and voice tone. Some general netiquette guidelines are:

1. Even though this is a virtual space, please bring your best self to each classroom engagement.
2. The virtual classroom is a sacred teaching space. While it is clear that your physical location will be in your home, you must be fully present and prepared to present a scholarly posture. You must be seated upright and must not wear anything that suggests you are either still in bed or just getting up from sleeping ( no pajamas, head bonnets, rollers or other hair adornments) that suggest you are not prepared to present yourself as a young scholar.
3. ***Be Brief:*** Make sure your comments are concise. Don’t stray from the discussion topic.
4. ***Don’t Shout!*** TYPING IN ALL CAPS IS CONSIDERED SHOUTING ON THE INTERNET.
   1. If your goal is to emphasize a point, **bold** the word(s) that you want to stand out.
5. ***Respect Privacy:*** Your class discussion board is open only to those enrolled in the class.
   1. Do not forward postings or comments from your classmates to others without permission.
6. ***Check Your Tone:*** Read your post a second time before pressing submit. Read your post again during the thirty minutes you are allowed to revise posts. This is your opportunity to *Re-do*. Remember that there's a person or a whole class at the receiving end of your post.
7. ***Use Correct Spelling and Grammar*** when composing your message. Do not use acronymsthat not everyone would understand and know. Although very popular, the excessive use of acronyms and emoticons can make your message difficult to read. *Examples:* BTW =by the way, :-­‐) =smile,-­‐D=laughing, :( =frowning, sad – Also, don’t use extra punctuation. (??????, !!!!!!)
8. ***Participate:*** This is a shared learning environment. It is not enough to log in and read the discussion thread of others. For the maximum benefit to all, everyone must contribute.
9. ***Your Password is Private:*** Never give your password to another person. Please note that IT administrators will **never** ask you for this. This is not really a netiquette rule but very important to protecting your identity online.
10. ***Report System Issues:*** If for any reason you experience difficulty participating in the course, please call the MIT Help Desk. Others might be having the same problem. This helps the entire community.

For more information about netiquette, refer to the following:

* The Core Rules of Netiquette –

<http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>

**Required Books**

Tera Hunter, *To ‘Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors After the Civil War.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Sarah Haley, *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

Premilla Nadasen, *Household Workers Unite: The Untold Story of African American Women Who Built A Movement.* Boston: Beacon Press, 2015

Carol Anderson, *One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression Is Destroying Our Democracy.* New York: Bloomsbury, 2018.

Danielle Phillips-Cunningham, *Putting Their Hands on Race: Irish Immigrant and Southern Black Domestic Workers.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2020.

***\*Students do not need to purchase the books. We are conscious of costs during this pandemic and will support students based on their needs. We will also post online the assigned chapters from each book.***

**Reading Schedule**

***Introduction: Dominant Narrative and Counternarrative***

**February 1: Introduction to the Syllabus**

**Read before class:** Crenshaw, Kimberlé. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Issue 1, Article 8, 138-167

**February 8: COVID-19: A Pandemic Lens for Typically Marginalized and Invisible Work(ers)**

Valerie Wilson and Melat Kessa, “Black women workers are essential during the crisis and for the recovery but still are greatly underpaid,” [https://www.epi.org/blog/black-women-workers-are-essential-during-the-crisis-and-for-the-recovery-but-still-are-greatly-underpaid/](about:blank), August 2020

Jocelyn Frye, “On the Frontlines at Work and at Home: The Disproportionate Economic Effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Women of Color” [https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2020/04/23/483846/frontlines-work-home/](about:blank), April 23, 2020.

*Video Clips:* [Clap Back against Worker Inequities](about:blank), Ford Foundation, 2020.

***Historical & Political Contextualization: Disparities in Labor and Quality of Life***

**February 15: Labor Resistance Post-Slavery**

Tera Hunter, *To ‘Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors After the Civil War.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997. (selected chapters)

Dr. Mona Phillips, Spelman’s Presidential Inauguration Program Speech, 2016.

**February 22: Whiteness, Intersectionality and Labor**

Danielle Phillips-Cunningham, *Putting Their Hands on Race: Irish Immigrant and Southern Black Domestic Workers.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2020. (selected chapters)

Roediger, David. “Irish-American Workers and White Racial Formation in the Antebellum United States,” *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class.* New York: Verso,133-166.

**February 29: Prison Labor and the American Project**

Mary Church Terrell, “Peonage in the United States: The Convict Lease System and the Chain Gangs,” *The Nineteenth Century And After: A Monthly Review.* London: New Street Square Publishing (August 1907): 306-322.

Sarah Haley, *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016. (selected chapters)

*Video Clips, Art, Archives:* [Formerly Incarcerated Firefighters on California Prison Labor](about:blank), Time Magazine, 2020.

[Faith Ringgold Captures the “Long Road,” Ahead](about:blank), National Museum of Women in the Arts, 2013.

“[The United States of Attica](about:blank),” *Still Raising Hell* Archival Exhibit: Fight the Power, Emory University Library MARBL.

*In Class:* [*The 13th*](about:blank)*,* Ava Duvernay, Stream on Netflix, 2016. (The film explores the "intersection of race, justice, and [mass incarceration](about:blank) in the United States….DuVernay contends [with] "systems of racial control" and forced labor from the years after the abolition of [slavery](about:blank) to the present.)

**March 1: Domestic Workers & Movement Building**

Premilla Nadasen, *Household Workers Unite: The Untold Story of African American Women Who Built A Movement.* Boston: Beacon Press, 2015. (selected chapters)

Owliaei, Negin and Sofia Salazar. “[Black Immigrant Domestic Workers Share Notes on the Storm](about:blank),” Institute for Policy Studies, June 2020.

**March 8: International Women’s Day & the Role of Culture, Religion in Black Worker Organizing**

Rosetta E. Ross’s *Witnessing & Testifying: Black Women, Religion, and Civil Rights.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003. (selected chapters)

[BlackWomxnDemands: A Dialogue Series](about:blank) on National Black Worker Centers #BlackLaborDay, Center for Innovation in Worker Organization, 2020.

Pitts, Steven C. “The National Black Worker Center Project: Grappling with the Power-Building Imperative,” No One Size Fits All, Labor and Employment Relations Association Series, 2018, pp. 115-137.

**March 15: Mid-Term Office Hours**

**March 18-19: Mid-Term Exams—Video Presentations**

***Contemporary Racial, Class, and Gender Disparities in Labor***

**March 22nd**

“Essential Workers to Testify to North Carolina General Assembly,” [https://fightfor15.org/essential-workers-testify-to-north-carolina-general-assembly/](about:blank), 2020.

View the entire hearing: [https://www.seiu.org/blog/2020/6/so-i-quit-the-chicken-plant-and-got-a-job-at-circle-k](about:blank)

Freshour, Carrie. “Cheap Meat, Cheap Work in the US Poultry Industry: Race, Gender, and Immigration in Corporate Strategies to Shape Labor,” in Elizabeth Ransom and Bill Winders eds., *Global Meat: Social and Environmental Consequences of the Expanding Meat Industry.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019.

**March 29th Public Sector Workers and the Common Good**

Davis, Sheri & Marilyn Sneiderman. “[Moneybags for Billionaires, BodyBags for Workers: Organizing the Time of Pandemics](about:blank),”

“Teachers for Black Lives,” [https://spfe28.org/get-involved/teachers-for-black-lives/](about:blank), 2016.

Andrene Castro, “The Activist Work of K-12 Educators: Then and Now,” [https://www.aaihs.org/the-activist-work-of-k-12-educators-then-and-now/](about:blank), October 2017.

Titilayo Tinubu and Erica Jones, “Teachers are Essential Workers, We Need To Treat Them As Such,” [https://www.southerneducation.org/resources/blog/featured/teachers-essential-workers/](about:blank), September 24, 2020.

**April 5th I Am A Man: Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike and the AFL-CIO**

[At the River I Stand](about:blank), *California Newsreel*, 1993.

Panel of Black Worker Justice Leaders & Strategists in partnership with Advancing Black Strategist Initiative.

**April 12: Voting for Our Lives & Worker Justice**

Carol Anderson, *One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression Is Destroying Our Democracy.* New York: Bloomsbury, 2018.

**April 19 Exploring New Frameworks for Equity for All Workers**

Holder, Michelle. The “Double Gap” And the Bottom Line: African American Women’s Wage Gap and Corporate Profits, Roosevelt Institute, March 2020.

Holder, Michelle. “[How Gender and Racial Discrimination Lead to a Double Wage Gap for African American Women](about:blank),” May 2020.

Bozarth, Kendra, Grace Western and Janelle Jones “[Black Women Best: The Framework We Need For An Equitable Economy](about:blank),” Roosevelt Institute Issue Brief, September 2020.

**April 26: Office Hours**

Office Hours to Workshop Final Papers/Projects

**April 28th Student Presentations**

**May 3-7 Final Exams**